



NAMI Basics Education Program Pilot Evaluation Final Report Summary June 2008

The NAMI Basics Education Program was developed in 2007. It is a six-class psycho-educational program designed specifically for parents and other caregivers of children and adolescents who have either been diagnosed with a mental illness/serious emotional disturbance or who are experiencing symptoms but have not yet been given a formal diagnosis. The program is taught by two trained parent teachers using a detailed curriculum. The goals of the NAMI Basics Education Program are:

- To give parents/caregivers the fundamental information they need to be effective as a caregiver
- To help parents/caregivers cope with the traumatic impact that mental illness has on the child living with the illness and the entire family.
- To provide tools for parents/caregivers to use even after completing the program that will assist them in making the best decisions possible for the care of their child.
- To help the parent/caregiver take the best care possible of the entire family – especially themselves.

A pilot evaluation was conducted by Missouri State University on the NAMI Basics classes provided in three states, Illinois, Utah and South Carolina between January and May, 2008. A Pre-Post Test design was used to measure each participants' changes in knowledge about mental illness in children and adolescents, as well as changes in their own perceptions of (1) the impact of the illness on their family and (2) their personal ability to influence treatment interventions and advocacy related to their child's illness.

The following describes the participants in the pilot classes:

- Average age of participants was 45 (range of ages 23 to 82 years)
- 81% of participants were female
- 66% were married
- 83% were Caucasian
- 78% reported some college level education
- 63% reported that the child they were concerned about had two or more diagnoses
The most commonly endorsed diagnoses were:
 - ADHD - 52%
 - Mood Disorder - 54%
 - Anxiety Disorder - 26%
 - Oppositional Defiant Disorder - 15%
- Average age for the child first being diagnosed was 8 years
- 72% indicated the child was 10 years or younger at the time of the first diagnosis
- Average length of time in treatment was 5 years, with a range of 2 months to 10 years.

RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS

The study found that parents/caregivers who participated in the NAMI Basics Education Program demonstrated an increase in their own knowledge about mental illness in children and adolescents, as well as the assessment, treatment and advocacy regarding the illnesses. The study also found that the perception that parents/caregivers had of themselves and their own reactions to the illnesses of their children were improved after taking the course.

The researcher concluded that participation in NAMI Basics appears to be associated with increases in knowledge about childhood and adolescent mental illness, assessment and treatment, and advocacy. NAMI will pursue further evaluation of the program to provide more empirical support for the utility of this program and contribute toward eventual designation as an Evidence Based Practice.